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Home > PROPOSAL TO BALANCE STATE BUDGET WITH DEDICATED TRANSIT DOLLARS COULD CAUSE MAJOR REDUCTIONS IN LOCAL TRANSIT SERVICE

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*MTS COULD LOSE \$9,000,000 FROM
MTS FY 09 OPERATING BUDGET AND RESULT IN A NET LOSS OF \$13,000,000*

San Diego, CA –With ridership demand at an all time high, the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) has been advised that State Legislators are being asked to vote on a proposal that would drastically cut the dollars MTS receives from the State. One part of the proposal that the Legislature is expected to vote on this week is whether to suspend Proposition 42. Suspending Proposition 42 would create a \$9 million dollar hole in the MTS operating budget and force major reductions of MTS Bus and Trolley Service.

On the operating side, MTS has strived to keep as much of the Bus and Trolley network in place while at the same time eliminating under-performing bus and trolley service, increasing fares, and reducing staff as a way of responding to budget cuts and increased fuel costs. As prices at the gas pump have risen, the public has been riding more and asking for more public transit services as a way to maintain their mobility and stay within their own budget constraints. In June, Trolley ridership increased by 17 percent and MTS buses by almost ten percent.

MTS Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Paul Jablonski says, “If the State suspends Proposition 42, MTS would lose more than \$9 million dollars in funding plus the corresponding farebox revenue for a total \$13 million negative impact on MTS Bus and Trolley operations.” Jablonski continues, “This would force the Board of Directors to consider drastic reductions or eliminations in major categories of services. That amount of service is equivalent to complete elimination of express bus services plus 11 percent of all trolley trips.”

In addition, the State is considering taking funds that are used for transit capital projects by reducing transit operators’ share of gas tax revenues. The California Transit Association (CTA), an industry group that takes a close look at major issues impacting public transit, has issued a notice stating, “Taking transportation and transit funding breaks faith with 77 percent of voters who passed Proposition 1A in 2006 for the state to leave transportation funds for transportation and transit improvements.”

MTS is urging those interested in public transit to contact their representatives and ask them to vote in support of the Budget Conference Committee’s recommended compromise. This compromise does not fully spare public transit from bearing a share of the state budget deficit reduction, but it would provide \$559 million for the State Transit Assistance program, of which, \$34 million would make its way to San Diego County to be used for operating support and for capital projects that would help meet the cost of rising demand and higher fuel costs.

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